

1                                   **MR. GREG MARKELZ**

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3                   CHAIRMAN JAMES:   Greg Markelz.

4                   MR. MARKELZ:    Thank you for allowing me to address  
5 the Commission this afternoon.   I'm the president of Markelz  
6 Office Products in Joliet, Illinois, where as you know there are  
7 two riverboat casinos.   Our business has been in Joliet for over  
8 100 years.   It is a rare third generation family business.   I  
9 just purchased the business three years ago, so it's fairly  
10 recently third generation.

11                   In the early 90's there was a time when I didn't know  
12 I was going to buy the business and it would become third  
13 generation because most of the businesses in the Joliet area at  
14 the time was either stagnant or in a downturn.   We had a high  
15 unemployment rate and our business was no exception.   We were  
16 down in sales and just the opportunities for us to sell to people  
17 locally were limited.

18                   With the emergence of the riverboats in Joliet the  
19 whole business community took a different attitude.   People were  
20 going from just trying to survive to a more positive aggressive  
21 stance toward improving the economy and the quality of life in  
22 the community.   The improvements have been visible and  
23 noticeable.   Streets and sidewalks are improved, cleaner, just  
24 the basic feel of what you see when you walk around the city is  
25 much improved.

26                   I have lived there my whole life so I've seen, for  
27 the last 39 years, everything.   The presence of the casinos  
28 themselves also added a touch of class.   It's a kind of view that  
29 you may not hear that often.   But when I would talk to my friends

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1 about, hey, you know, there goes the Empress, it just opened last  
2 month and the idea was we've really got something here now we can  
3 be proud of. It's really neat to go down there and see something  
4 that's kind of classy instead of just your typical malls and what  
5 we're used to seeing in town.

6 The circle of people employed by the casinos is very  
7 wide, as most of the people I know have either a friend or  
8 relative or acquaintance that works there. I even have an  
9 employee that goes quite often to the boats, not just Joliet, but  
10 all over. She travels to Iowa and Indiana and enjoys herself. I  
11 would like to think she's a more typical type of gambler who  
12 goes, knows what risk she can take and wins some and loses some.  
13 She knows she probably comes out on the negative side, but she  
14 gets a lot of entertainment for that dollar.

15 Also the employees that they do have in Joliet spend  
16 a tremendous amount of money improving the outlook for hundreds  
17 of small businesses. These businesses have less of a voice than  
18 the large businesses. They're not that vocal about what happens  
19 but the small restaurants, video stores and things like that,  
20 people have money to go out and spend every night, that makes an  
21 impact.

22 In reference to my business going after a large  
23 account like the Empress or Harrah's required new thinking. I  
24 had to improve many aspects of our business in order to compete  
25 with larger competitors than I ever had before. So the impact of  
26 gaining these accounts was from June, '95 till now, our sales  
27 have doubled, the number of our staff has doubled as well. We  
28 continue to expand as a result of the lessons we learned from the  
29 time the riverboats came to town. Thank you.

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CHAIRMAN JAMES: Thank you.

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